

Congress must appropriate \$32.5 million for needs of Filipino, Vietnam veterans

There should be pilot program for satellite cemeteries

By BOB FILNER

Member of U.S. Congress

(Statement of Congressman Filner before the House
Appropriations Committee)



As a senior member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, I would like to call your attention the dire need for cemetery facilities and services for our 282,000 veterans in San Diego County.

Every veteran is most concerned that upon his demise, interment may become a source of aggravation for his family and close friends. Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego is no longer open to ground burials, and interment at Riverside National Cemetery is at least a four hour traffic ordeal for loved ones. The establishment of another National Cemetery in the San Diego area may not come for decades. It is clear to us that the need is now for additional national cemetery facilities for our veterans in San Diego County.

A commendable local effort among the private sector, local authorities and veterans organizations has produced what I consider to be a viable interim solution, a pilot program establishing two satellite cemeteries

to Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery.

SCI California Funeral Services, Inc. (a private organization) has agreed to donate to the Veteran's Memorial Center, Inc. (a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization) two sites within its own Glen Abbey and Eternal Hills cemeteries. The land at each site is over twenty acres and requires contouring to be acceptable for national cemetery interment. Accordingly, I ask that the Appropriations Committee direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a satellite cemeteries pilot program, and provide such funds as may be required for study and acquisition of sites.

I request your support for \$2.5 million in funding for the expansion of the Vietnam Veterans of San Diego (VVSD) facility from the Housing and Urban Development-Economic Development Initiative (HUD-EDI) account.

The VVSD program is privately run and targets homeless veterans with substance abuse and mental illness issues, including post

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). With roughly 2,000 homeless veterans in the San Diego region, many homeless vets seeking treatment and housing are kept from receiving it every day because the VVSD facility is overcrowded. This proposal would ultimately expand the detoxification, treatment and housing capacity of VVSD to more than double its current capacity.

Filipino World War II Veterans

Since coming to Congress, I have worked through a number of authorizing bills to right this wrong. I would like the committee to consider adding \$30 million for access to VA medical facilities, for Filipino World War II veterans who were drafted into service by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and then, shortly after the war ended, were excluded from benefits by the Rescissions Act of 1946.

Particularly unfortunate was the language of this Rescissions Act which said that service in the Philippine forces was not to be considered active military service for the purposes of veterans benefits. It shocked the thousands of Filipinos who, along with the Americans with whom they fought side-by-side, suffered brutality during the Bataan Death March and as prisoners of war. This change is long overdue.